

Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



James E. Hartl, AICP Director of Planning

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Date: February 9, 2004

Project Title: Project No. 03-249 (Tick Canyon)

Discretionary Tentative Tract Map No. 060259;

Requests: Conditional Use Permit for Hillside Management, Grading, and Density

Controlled Development; Oak Tree Permit; and

Annexation to County Sanitation Districts 26 and 32

CEQA Lead Agency: County of Los Angeles

Department of Regional Planning – Impact Analysis Section

Attn: Roxanne Tanemori

320 West Temple Street, Room 1348

Los Angeles, California 90012

Project Applicant: Synergy / Brookfield, LLC

Attn: Rick Doremus

19200 Von Karman, Suite 600

Irvine, California 92612

The County of Los Angeles (County or Lead Agency) will be the lead agency and will prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the project identified above. In compliance with Section 21080.4 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), codified in Section 21000 et seq. of the Public Resources Code, and Section 15082 of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (State CEQA Guidelines), codified in Section 15000et seq. in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, the County is issuing this "Notice of Preparation" (NOP) to the State Clearinghouse, to those responsible agencies and federal agencies that may be involved in approving or permitting the proposed project, to trustee agencies responsible for natural resources affected by the project, to transportation planning and public agencies that have transportation facilities within their jurisdiction, and to other interested parties.

The purpose of this NOP is to solicit the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency may need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

Within thirty (30) days after receiving this NOP, each agency and each such party shall provide the County with specific comments regarding the scope and content of the information to be contained in the EIR related to each agency's area of statutory responsibility.

Project Location

The proposed project site is located in Santa Clarita Valley, in an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County known as "Canyon Country." The approximately 502-acre project site abuts the northeastern corner of the City of Santa Clarita (City) but is not located within the City's adopted Sphere of Influence.

The project site is located within the planning area of the "Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan" (Area Plan). The Area Plan is a component of the "County of Los Angeles General Plan." Planning and land use decisions with regards to the proposed project will be based on the plans and policies established therein.

The project site is located approximately one-mile north of State Route 14 (Antelope Valley Freeway) in Sections 5, 6, and 7, Township 4 North, Range 14 West, San Bernardino Base and Meridian, as identified on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-Minute Agua Dulce and Mint Canyon Topographic Quadrangles. The project site can be generally described as a canyon setting. Tick Canyon Creek, a tributary to the Santa Clara River, traverses the project site in generally a northeasterly to southwesterly direction. The project site is not located within the boundaries of the "Santa Clara River Significant Ecological Area."

A regional map depicting the general project location is included as <u>Figure 1</u> (Regional Vicinity Map). The project's local setting is depicted in <u>Figure 2</u> (Local Vicinity Map). The project site is located within the boundaries of the William S. Hart and the Sulphur Springs School Districts, and the Newhall County Water District. Gas and electrical service will be provided by the Southern California Gas Company and Southern California Edison Company, respectively.

Vehicular access to the project site is currently provided by means of a number of unimproved roadways that connect with improved roadways to both the north and the south. Shadow Pines Boulevard provides access to the project site from the south; Davenport Road provides access from the north. The proposed extension of Shadow Pines Boulevard, as a four-lane "secondary" highway, from its existing terminus at Grandifloras Road, through and beyond the subject property, is identified on both the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan's "Master Plan of Highway and Roadway System" and on the County's "North Portion Los Angeles County Highway Plan." North of its current terminus, Shadow Pines Boulevard becomes unimproved Tick Canyon Road. The extension of Shadow Pines Boulevard to the project site will be a required off-site improvement.

The project site can be generally described as a canyon setting. Tick Canyon Creek, a tributary to the Santa Clara River, traverses the project site in generally a northeasterly to southwesterly direction. The project site is not located within the boundaries of any Significant Ecological Area (SEA), as designated in the "County of Los Angeles General Plan." The project site can generally be described as consisting of a broad valley, surrounding by high ridges and intersecting canyons.

With the exception of a network of unimproved roadways traversing the site, the subject property is presently vacant. The dominant plant communities within the project boundaries include Riversidian Sage Scrub and Buckwheat Scrub/Scrub Oak Chaparral. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published a proposed critical habitat designation for the California gnatcatcher (*Polioptilla californicus*) on April 24, 2003 (68 FR 20228). A portion of the project site is located within the proposed "Unit 13: Western Los Angeles and Ventura Counties" critical habitat unit.

Existing single-family residences abut the site's westerly border. Similarly, single-family properties abut the proposed extension of Shadow Pines Boulevard/Tick Canyon Road on the south, east, and west. A limited number of older, rural dwelling units are located to the north and northeast of the project area.

Project Description

The proposed project involves the subdivision of the 502-acre property to accommodate 492 single-family residential units. Preliminary hillside density analysis indicates an upper limit density of 496.2 units on the subject property. In addition, an approximately 34-acre park site would be graded for subsequent development as either a neighborhood or regional park. The improved park site would be conveyed to the County of Los Angeles and dedicated as permanent Open Space. Plans for an on-site pedestrian trail system are also part of the proposed project. All project-related park and trail improvements will be identified on the tentative tract map. In accordance with the requirements of the Los Angeles County Fire Department and water company, an above ground water tank would be erected along the site's northern boundary to provide potable water and fire flow capacity to the property and the proposed on-site land uses.

All of the proposed dwelling units would be located on the northwest side of Tick Canyon Creek. Bank improvements would be provided to stabilize the side slopes of that wash and to ensure that Shadow Pines Boulevard/Tick Canyon Road remains an all-weather secondary highway. South of the project site, the wash enters an existing box culvert paralleling the proposed extension of Shadow Pines Boulevard/Tick Canyon Road.

An approximately 0.6 mile extension of Shadow Pines Boulevard, directly south of the project site boundaries, is proposed. Based on the findings of the upcoming environmental and subdivision review processes, additional off-site street improvements to the north could become a project component, if deemed necessary for emergency access purposes. Access to the 492 dwelling units would be provided by construction of a new system of collector and local streets that would connect to the proposed extension of Shallow Pines Boulevard/Tick Canyon Road.

Lot sizes would range from about 5,000 square feet to over 7,000 square feet. Internal road rights-of-way would vary in width from between 80 feet for Shallow Pines Boulevard/Tick Canyon Road to 58 feet for interior collector roads.

An estimated 5-million cubic yards of cut and 5-million cubic yard of fill is anticipated to accommodate the proposed uses. Although grading quantities are designed to be balanced, some exportation of soil materials may reasonably be anticipated. In addition, one or more off-site grading easements may be required in order to implement the proposed grading plan. Additional off-site acreage north of the project boundaries may also be utilized for a proposed potable water reservoir. The extent of any off-site encroachment would be limited to that required to implement the proposed grading plan and would be subject to agreement by the affected property owner. In the absence of evidence of that agreement, the grading plan would be revised to confine all project-related grading activities to the project site.

Project implementation would require a number of permits and approvals from the County. Those actions include, but may not be limited to: (1) approval of Tentative Tract Map No. 060259 (Title 21, Section 21.40.160, Los Angeles County Code); (2) issuance of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for (a) hillside management (Title 22, Section 22.56.215, Los Angeles County Code), (b) grading project/off-site transport (Title 22, Section 22.56.210, Los Angeles County

Code), and (c) density controlled development (Title 22, Section 22.56.205, Los Angeles County Code); (3) oak tree permit (Title 22, Section 22.56.2060, Los Angeles County Code); and (4) maintenance district annexation (Title 20, Section 20.32.270, Los Angles County Code).

In addition, permits and approvals may be required from a number of other Federal, State, and local agencies including, but not necessarily limited to: (1) United States Army Corps of Engineers; (2) United States Fish and Wildlife Service; (3) Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region; (4) California Department of Transportation, District 7; and (5) California Department of Fish and Game, Region 5.

Potential Environmental Effects

Pursuant to Section 15063 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning prepared an "Initial Study," dated September 18, 2003, and determined that the project, as proposed, had the potential to produce significant or potentially significant environmental effects, thus predicating the need for the preparation of an EIR. The Initial Study provides a preliminary assessment of the potential environmental effects to be analyzed in the Tick Canyon EIR. The Initial Study determined that the project may have significant or potentially significant effects relative to:

Hazards

- Geotechnical (seismicity, liquefaction, slope stability, grading);
- Flood (Tick Canyon Creek, erosion);
- Fire (Fire Zone 4, access, fire flow); and
- Noise (Antelope Valley Freeway, construction and operational noise).

Resources

- Water quality (NPDES/SUSMP, increased urban runoff);
- Air quality (fugitive dust, mobile source emissions, cumulative impacts);
- Biota/Wildlife (habitat loss, sensitive and protected species, jurisdictional waters); and
- Cultural resources (oak tree removal, archaeological resources).

Visual Quality

Landform alteration (grading).

Services

- Traffic and access (vehicle trips, freeway traffic, City/County streets, CMP threshold);
- Sewage disposal (new facilities, maintenance district annexation);
- Education (school capacity, library facilities); and
- Utilities and other services (new facilities, water supplies, solid waste).

Other

Growth inducement.

In addition to an examination of the above described issues, the EIR will include each of the mandatory elements identified in the State CEQA Guidelines and include an analysis of a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project. Those alternatives may include, but are not necessarily limited to: (1) a "no project" alternative; and (2) a reduced-density alternative.

Notice of Preparation Review and Comment

The review period for the NOP will commence on **February 9, 2004** and conclude on March 10, 2004. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than **March 10, 2004**. Please direct all written comments to the following address. In your written response, please include the name of a contact person in your agency.

Ms. Roxanne Tanemori

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